

Unmasking the Underworld

To the people of the upper world as well as to the majority of the underworld comparatively little is known of the activities and income of the "heel worker" or "damper getter." Years ago he was called a "till tapper" and the tool was generally a daring small boy, working under the instruction of a "Fagin" who sent him into shops to crawl unnoticed behind the counters to steal from the money drawers whatever of silver or bills there.

But that was before the advent of the "music box" (cash register) took the graft out of boys' line of work into a proposition demanding considerable brains to plan and ability to execute store robberies with minimum risk and maximum profit. It has developed into a regular occupation with many hands of two, three and four members known as heel mobs.

BUSY AT THEIR TRADE.

Although some of these "mobs" stay in one city permanently, the higher class of damper getters work about a month in Chicago, a month in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, shorter periods in smaller cities, always going and coming, plying their trade every day, all day long, everywhere. They become known as heel men to the police of any one city only when one of their number "drops for a fall." The rare times I have heard of a first-class heel man going to prison were on account of failure to save sufficient "fall money" out of the earnings of a mob, money with which to hire a clever "mouthpiece" (lawyer) or bribe the cops.

Tom, Jerry, Harry and Dick form a "mob out on the heel." Tom is middle-aged, ruddy, in dress and appearance a prosperous stock broker. Jerry is younger, an athletic, vigorous young bank clerk to the casual glance. Harry is past 50, with hair almost white and would pass for that well-known taxpayer, "pro bono publico." Dick, of uncertain age, can assume with equal ease the role of meter inspector or police inspector.

LAYING OUT THE DAYS WORK.

They meet by appointment at their favorite cafe at 7 a. m., have a cocktail as they read the papers and map out the morning's work, which starts at 8 a. m. sharp. Selecting eight square blocks in the busiest section of town, each is given two blocks to cover in the following manner:

Tom goes to his allotted station, where every building contains one or more stores. He enters each one in turn to note how business is carried on—where the registers are located, their particular model, how easily accessible, how near an opening in the counter they are placed, whether a cashier is employed or if the salespeople operate the music boxes. Also where conditions seem favorable he makes a "buy" in order to see if the register contains many big bills.

Emerging from the store that he thinks a good robbery prospect, he writes down its name, address and enough data to furnish a useful report to the mob, in this way the eight blocks are canvassed by the industrious four. At noon they gather to submit for the consideration of Jerry, the master mind of the band, the result of their observations.

JERRY MAKES THE DECISION.

By careful process of elimination Jerry reduces these prospects in number to about a half-dozen stores, and upon him rests the final decision as to which places shall be robbed. That afternoon he visits some of the stores on the revised list, selects the one which seems the best venture for his men and perfects his plan of future action there. The next day Jerry devotes to the others on the list, while the other three continue in their "findings."

At the end of a week they have thoroughly covered a large district and Jerry has a number of stores picked out for robbery, the details for each one thoroughly worked out and decided upon. Jerry is the tool or actual money getter, the others are his stalls, and although he is open to suggestions from the stalls they must finally be governed by his instructions, because he runs the risk of losing his liberty; he alone "takes a chance."

The first store they rob is, we will say, a busy hardware retail establishment having several different de-

partments, each department having its own special clerk and cash register. This particular place has a rush hour in which it is hard to be waited on. The music box where the steel drills, etc., are sold is the objective of our friends. During the rush hour Tom goes there and has the salesman wrap up for a \$2 twist drill, and then takes the clerk back to the manager's office to get figures on the installation of a steam heating plant in his castle in Spain, a twenty-room house.

By this time Harry (pro bono publico) is at the next counter to the rear making a stall purchase. Dick, standing in the aisle, signals, by taking his hat off, to Jerry on the sidewalk just as Tom goes away from the drill counter with the salesman. Jerry, bareheaded, in his shirt sleeves, walks in rapidly with a bushy air and goes directly to the cash register behind the counter. The moment he reaches the music box Harry drops \$10 in silver quarters on the floor, attracting general attention to himself as he nervously starts to gather up the scattered coins, while Jerry calmly empties the register and walks out of the store.

CALMLY CONTINUE ROBBERING.

In a few minutes the four are together again, with Jerry giving final instructions to his stalls regarding the next place he has chosen to rob. Back in the hardware store the loss may not be discovered for half an hour or more, and often the salesman is not only suspected of the theft but is lucky if he escapes imprisonment for the heel job he knows nothing about.

I myself with two stalls have taken three such music boxes inside of an hour.

But this graft is not by any means confined to music boxes. As a rule the biggest money on the heel is stolen from saloons. Nearly every cafe has besides the register a damper or money drawer located in the back bar, wherein are kept varying sums under lock and key during business hours and in the safe at night. Out of his damper the proprietor may pay his landlord the rent, the brewery collector for the beer, and here, too, is kept the cash for the accommodation of well-known customers who desire to have checks cashed.

In one of our large cities is a saloon run by a big German who does considerable business. Jake, the boss, pays all his bills in currency out of a cigar box he keeps in a damper while he is behind the bar, and when he goes upstairs he takes it with him.

Several heel mobs had exhausted their ingenuity in vain attempts to get Jake to leave this damper unprotected for a few minutes during the hour when his two bartenders were upstairs eating dinner and he alone in the bar. But whether it was because Jake could not be stalled on account of a suspicious nature or just his stolid lassitude they failed to accomplish their purpose.

OUT FOR BIG GAME.

Finally two heel men formed a plan and waited until the first of the month, when they were reasonably sure, if successful, to get a month's rent, beer bill and the check money. On the afternoon of the first day of the month Jake was leaning his enormous frame against the back bar, talking to two German friends who stood drinking beer before him. A well-dressed stranger came in, ordered a beer, accidentally spilled some of it on his hands, asked Jake where he could wash them, and was directed to the washroom in the rear.

Shortly after the stranger went to wash his hands Jake's attention was drawn to the front window by the sight of a man in overalls ascending a ladder with a saw in his hand.

"Hey, Shultz go out and see vot dot fella is doin' mit my house," said Jake.

Shultz went out and came back to the door, calling excitedly, "Come here once, Jake. Dot's a fella wnt' got a order from the mayor to take away from over your place the beer sign."

With a loud bellow of protest Jake and his friends hurried to the foot of the ladder upon which the workman was coolly starting to saw through an ornamental gilt goot.

"Hey you, what the heidemntion you doin' by me here vat you do?"

"Who are you?" asked the workman.

"I'm der boss."

"Not my boss," calmly said the man on the ladder as he turned to the sign again.

This so exasperated the German that he commenced shaking the ladder violently and the man came down, threw the saw on the ground and went away, vowing to have Jake arrested for interfering with the mayor's orders as soon as he could find a cop.

\$1.00 FOR A SAW.

Jake carried the ladder and saw into the store to await the arrival of the policeman. But long before any officer came Jake discovered that some one had pried open the damper with a "James" (Jimmy) and stolen over \$1.00. The saw now hangs over the bar as a souvenir of one of Jake's most unlucky days.

After Jerry's mob has cleaned up the main business section of town

It Is Rare for a First Class "Heel Man" to Go to Prison.

the owner. This plant may vary from \$50 to \$500, seldom less than the former and sometimes greater than the latter. The mob meets much earlier now about 6 a. m., in the neighborhood chosen, and each man again has an area to cover and a report to make.

LOCATING HIDDEN MONEY.

Tom visits several groceries, asking for change for \$10 before he sees a likely opening. Here he buys of a woman alone in the store a quarter's worth and gives a \$5 bill in payment. The woman goes back into the living-room and as Tom hears a drawer being pulled out he steps to the doorway and politely offers a \$1

bill instead of the other, saying "didn't know I had it," as he sees where the plant is kept.

In this manner one pretext or another serves to locate the plant and note is taken of essential details. The reports are reviewed, passed upon and where necessary further perfected by other visits to the prospect. Once the plant, representing hoarded savings or funds with which to pay bills, is found there remains the reckoning as to which of the many ways of luring the unsuspecting victim out of sight and hearing while Jerry sneaks in and takes it. Dick, for instance, may impersonate a health, gas or water inspector during the slackest hour of the day and bring the shopkeeper to either back yard, cellar or even roof of the building and be well away before the theft is found out.

These are the methods of heel workers. The man who follows this line of graft is perhaps as well off as any other underworld grafter, but if superficial reading of his activities seems to argue that his is a well-paid, well-chosen trade it is greatly misleading.

Jerry, for instance, never knows how long Tom, Dick or Harry is go-

How Much Is In Your Neighbor's Pay Envelope?

Do you earn more than \$1,000 a year?

If so, you are better off than fifty-nine out of every sixty persons in the United States.

Statistics compiled show that the average yearly income of persons employed in the principal industrial states of the Union range from \$401 to \$510.

Dr. Frank H. Straightoff, an authority on economics, places the minimum family income adequate to the maintenance of normal living conditions in the smaller cities of the north, according to the general prevailing American notion of decent living, at \$450. Accordingly, unless more than one member of each family contributes to the household expenses the income is \$150 a year less than adequate.

Estimates compiled show that not more than one person in every twenty-five engaged in gainful occupations in the United States earns over \$1,000 a year. The latest census returns show that only 40 per cent of the population is so employed. From this the deduction is made that not more than one person in every sixty men, women and children in the United States earns \$1,000 a year or more.

While the federal government has never made a survey of the earnings of the entire population, statistics have been compiled on certain industries. The last table made on the earnings of railroad employees shows that only seven men in every 100 earned as much as \$1,000 a year. Earnings of male employees under 21 years of age were not considered. Neither were the earnings of female employees. If there are but seven adult male employees in every 100 making over \$1,000 a year statisticians here are confident that not more than four employed persons in every 100 are making over \$1,000 when the low salaries of female employees and minor males is figured in the average.

With one of every twenty-five persons in the country making \$1,000 a year or more, there are in the United States approximately 1,500,000 with incomes of more than \$1,000 a year. The last census showed 38,187,366 persons engaged in gainful occupations. The total population at that time was 119,722,266, and the number of persons 10 years of age or over was 71,830,270. Fifty-three per cent, or a little more than half, of all the

persons in the United States over 10 years of age were engaged in gainful occupations.

They were engaged as follows:

Agriculture	12,659,203
Extraction of minerals	364,334
Manufacturing and mechanical industries	10,453,331
Transportation	2,837,631
Professional service	1,063,581
Domestic and personal service	3,772,174
Miscellaneous occupations	1,747,053

According to the estimates made as to the number of persons in the United States making in excess of \$1,000 a year and the returns made to the treasury department on the income tax statements, there are in this country 1,189,097 persons who have incomes of more than \$1,000 but less than \$3,000.

That there is widespread misconception as to the number of persons having even moderate incomes was proven by the returns made as a result of the passage of the income tax law. When the law was being considered by Congress estimates were made to the committee that at least 425,000 persons in the United States had incomes of more than \$3,000 per annum. The returns showed but 357,598.

When the law was passed it was believed that over 100 persons in the United States had incomes of more than \$1,000,000 a year. The returns showed only forty-four to be getting more than \$1,000,000. Similar reductions were made in all classes.

The first report made by the treasury department showed the number of returns made on the income tax to be as follows:

Annual Income	No. of returns
\$3,000 to \$4,000	79,425
\$4,000 to \$5,000	114,484
\$5,000 to \$10,000	101,733
\$10,000 to \$15,000	28,818
\$15,000 to \$20,000	11,977
\$20,000 to \$25,000	6,417
\$25,000 to \$30,000	4,164
\$30,000 to \$40,000	4,553
\$40,000 to \$50,000	2,437
\$50,000 to \$75,000	2,616
\$75,000 to \$100,000	898
\$100,000 to \$150,000	735
\$150,000 to \$200,000	311
\$200,000 to \$250,000	145
\$250,000 to \$300,000	94
\$300,000 to \$400,000	34
\$400,000 to \$500,000	44
\$500,000 to \$1,000,000	31
\$1,000,000 and over	44

In some industries of the United States the number of employees receiving \$6 and \$7 a week is twenty times as great as the number receiving \$50 a week. In the cotton industry in New Jersey there were 1,007 employees at \$6 and \$7 a week to forty-nine at \$25. A survey made in New Jersey in 1908 showed the average annual wage in 3,127 establishments in that state to be \$500.14. The number of persons employed in that number of establishments was 278,364.

Professor Nearing, who has devoted considerable study to the question of incomes in the United States, is said by Dr. Straightoff to have reached the conclusion that "not more than one adult male wage-earner in every twenty employed in the industries of Massachusetts received in annual earnings for a normally prosperous year more than \$1,000. On the other hand, more than one-third of all the adult males are paid wages under \$500; more than one-half receive wages under \$600; while nearly three-fourths receive less than \$700 annually."

In dealing with statistics on railroads Professor Nearing concluded that "in 1908 51 per cent of the million and a half railroad employees in the United States received less than \$625 a year; that 93 per cent received less than \$1,000 a year, leaving 7 per cent who earned more than \$1,000."

Dr. Spahr's estimates show that he has figured 300,000 persons in the United States make \$5,000 a year or over, 1,200,000 make from \$1,200 to \$5,000 and 11,000,000 get less than \$1,200 a year.

Nobody Got Licked.

There are a lot of four-flushers who go through life without learning that four-flushing is a fine art. Such are beneath contempt. But one has great admiration for those few who have mastered the game.

"If a man called me a liar," asserted one of such, "I'd sail in and lick him if he weighed 300 pounds."

"Well, you big bluff," answered one who was tired of listening. "I call you right here and now. You're a liar."

"Bluff yourself," came back the artist, without a minute's hesitation. "You don't weigh more than 150, and you know what I said."



Tom Then Takes the Clerk Back to the Manager's Office to Get Figures on the Installation of a Steam Heating Plant for His Castle in Spain, a Twenty-Room House.

they go to the poorer parts, where the shopkeeper lives in the rear of the shop. There are different conditions and a different objective. The meager day's receipts in a damper or register have no attraction for Jerry and his men.

They now go after the "plant" of